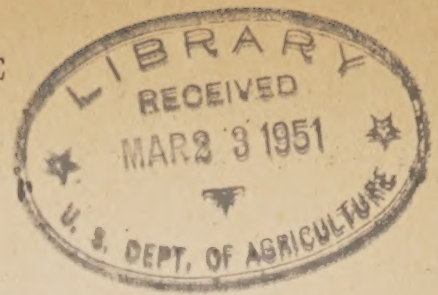


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Washington, D. C.



X THE FOOD SITUATION

(This summary was prepared for a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Victory Gardens, at Washington, D. C., January 22, 1951. It is based on the 1951 Outlook issue of The National Food Situation which was released October 31, 1950. Table and page citations in the following text refer to this document.)

Food Consumption

Per capita food consumption in 1951 will be at near record levels. Last year (1950), the American people consumed per capita 12 percent more food than during the prewar period 1935-39. In only three other years has the level been higher -- 1945, 1946 and 1947 (NFS, Table 1, p.2).

The long-time trend of food consumption by major food groups is shown in the attached chart.

Food Prices

Retail food prices now stand at an all-time high. Because further increases in consumer income are expected in 1951 some further increases in food prices are also expected. Supplies of food will be larger but demand will increase more than supply (NFS, p.3).

Fresh Vegetables (NFS, p.15)

Production in 1950 was very near the record high of 1946 (NFS, Table 15, p.37); but due to population increases, per capita domestic consumption was probably a little below the levels of 1945 and 1946 (NFS, Table 3). Commercial production of many fresh vegetables probably will be increased adequately in 1951 in response to anticipated higher prices, and probably could be pushed even further if the labor situation were more favorable. Surplus production occurred in 1950 in the case of some other truck crops, notably onions and cabbage. Per capita consumption of fresh vegetables is now running about 10

percent above prewar. Increasing consumer income will exert an upward pressure on supplies. Military takings are relatively inconsequential.

Canned Vegetables (NFS, p.15)

The all-time record rate of consumption was in 1946 -- at $46\frac{1}{2}$ pounds per capita (NFS, Table 3, p.4). The 1950 rate of 38 pounds was 28 percent above prewar level. Production in 1950 was 10 percent below the average for 1942-45. Military and export requirements in 1951 probably won't exceed 10 percent of the total pack; moreover increasing consumer demand for canned vegetables is expected to encourage larger packs. But if production per person in the civilian population in 1951 should be no larger than in 1950, prices would increase substantially. On the other hand, if production per person should reach the 1946 record, prices might not change much from present levels. Recommendations of the Department on size of packs are not yet determined.

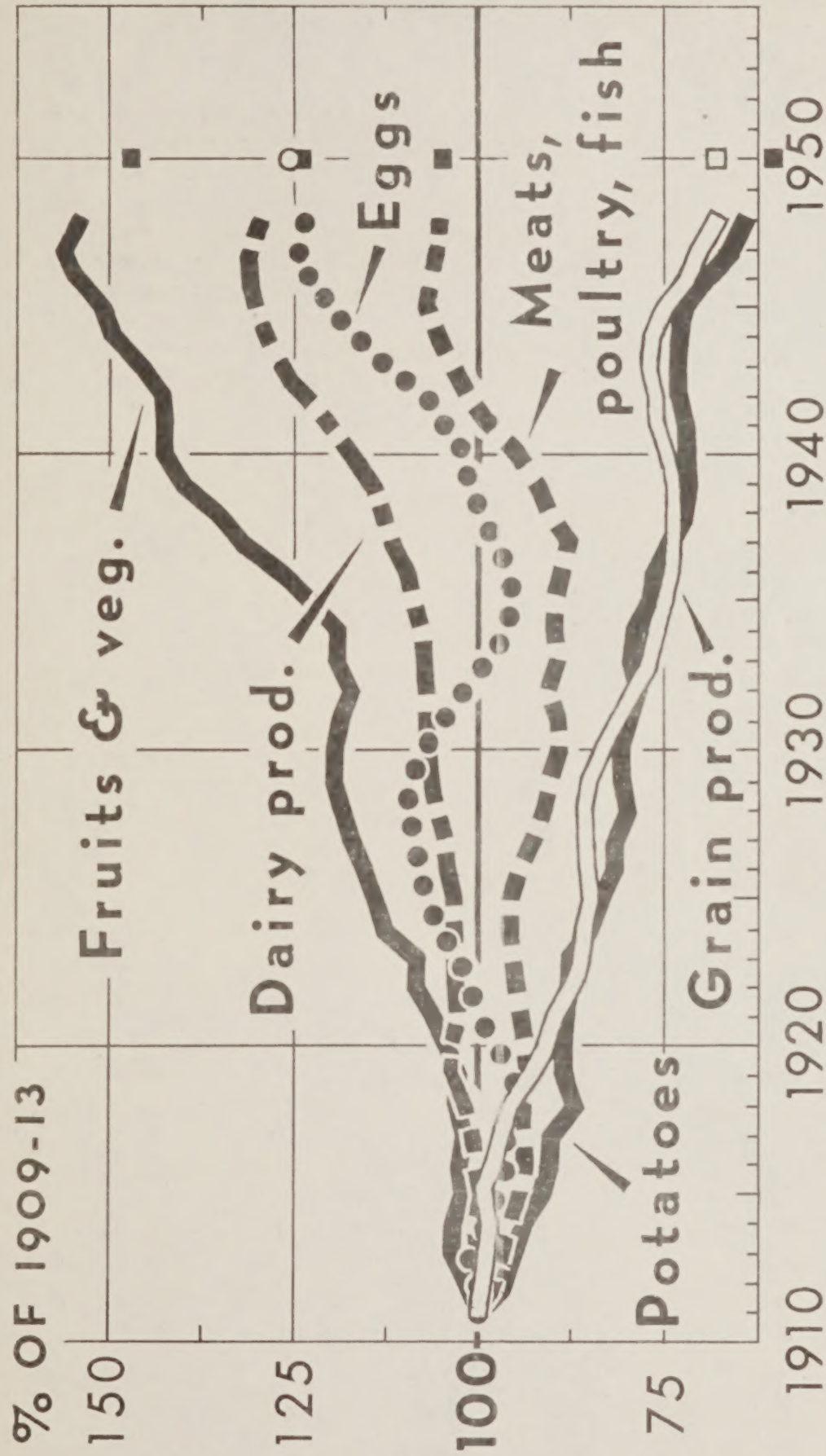
Frozen Vegetables

Almost every year new record highs are being established in both production and consumption. Further increases are expected in 1951. Military takings will increase, but will still be less than 10 percent of production.

Fruit Situation (NFS, p.13, also, Tables 3 and 15)

The long-time trend in per capita fruit consumption is upward. However, the per capita consumption of fresh fruit in the past two years has been below the 1935-39 average, and is expected to continue below that average in 1951. The per capita consumption of canned fruit and fruit juices reached an all-time high in 1946, and was somewhat below that level in 1950. New records of consumption and production of frozen fruits have been established each year for the past decade, except in 1948. New highs seem likely for 1951. Dried fruit production was very low in 1950; may be larger in 1951.

TRENDS IN OUR EATING HABITS*



5-YEAR MOVING AVERAGE CENTERED

* PER CAPITA CIVILIAN CONSUMPTION, UNITED STATES

